

## October 2008

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Welcome to the Commander's Corner of the Kansas Wing website. Whether it is your first visit or one of many or whether you are a member or not, we hope you find the website interesting and informative. We have been remodeling the site lately, so take some time to explore.

As wing commander, I am expected to provide leadership for the members of Kansas Wing. One way to do that is through opportunities like this column. In this first column, I would like to take the opportunity to talk to you about the concept of leadership. Most cadets who have attended an encampment can recite from memory the definition of leadership. Many adults have seen a definition of leadership related to their careers. For examples of leadership, we all know leaders who have respect and influence based on a position; however, I like to think of Kansas Wing as a place where any member, "can make a positive difference." That idea and phrase comes from a book by Mark Sanborn called, *You Don't Need a Title to be a Leader*.

While the Air Force defines leadership as the art of influencing and directing individuals toward a common objective, Sanborn defines leadership simply as positive influence. Sanborn tells us, "Influence and inspiration come from the person, not the position." I agree with Sanborn because I have seen people in leadership positions who did not lead. I have also seen individuals lead from within the ranks and have a huge impact on the success of the mission. While I see cadets and officers doing good things every day, two volunteers who have impressed me with their leadership lately are 1st Lt. Tim Kerfoot from New Century and 1st Lt. Kyle Velasquez from Howard Williams Composite. Lt. Kerfoot went out of his way to volunteer to help with the Cadet Advisory Council. He was not a member of the wing staff and it was not an assignment but he was interested and thought he could have an impact so he volunteered his time to assist. He did not wait for someone to ask for volunteers either—he took the initiative and asked if he could help. Like Lt. Kerfoot, we can all impact the things around us by stepping up and helping out. The second member who has impressed me lately with his efforts is Lt. Velasquez. He has spent countless hours working on the wing website. When I took command, many people provided ideas that might improve the site. He took the information and made it happen. In my experience, many people are often willing to talk about what needs done but far fewer take the initiative to roll up their sleeves and start the work. Lt Velasquez did just that. These two volunteers highlight a point I made when I interviewed for wing commander. Col. Kuddes, the NCR Commander, asked me to name Kansas Wing's greatest strength. I replied that the people of Kansas Wing are our greatest strength. I believe that is true, and that we can all help improve the wing.

Using Sanborn's ideas, we can see that, "everyone has the opportunity to lead, every day." I believe Sanborn is correct in this assessment. Every person has the opportunity every day to do things that influence others in a positive way or a negative way. The individual makes the choice. Sanborn asks, "Do you shape your life and career? Do you affect the quality of others' experiences? Do you inspire or influence others? Do you work to achieve specific goals by working with or coordinating the efforts of others?" Sanborn tells us that an answer of "yes" to any of the above questions indicates a leader. Finally, Sanborn tells us that often we consider the big events in history and those who contributed to them as leaders. However, what we fail to realize is that daily actions and efforts have a big impact as well. Are you the person who does the little things nobody else wants to do? If you are, then you are a leader also. The actions of higher-level leaders have an impact on their organizations, but the people who do the small tasks consistently well also have a role in the success of the organization.

Sanborn offers aspiring leaders the following tips:

- Act with a purpose rather than getting bogged down by mindless activity
- Care about and listen to others
- Look for ways to encourage the contributions and development of others rather than focusing solely on personal achievements
- Reach out to others with courtesy
- Create a legacy of accomplishment and contribution in everything you do

If you are interested in this concept or others like it, I recommend books by Mark Sanborn or John Maxwell. Both are very highly regarded motivational speakers and well known authors. John Maxwell is famous for his work *The 360 Degree Leader*. Many of the concepts in that work echo the concepts in Sanborn's book.

Armed with the concepts expressed in this column, I challenge you to go out and be a leader in some facet of your life each day. Improving our leadership skills is something that we can work on our entire life. If you think about it, each of us is a player in a leadership laboratory (not just the cadets). We have the potential, if we apply ourselves and we want to do so, to make an impact on the world around us every day. We may not all have titles (yet) but we have the potential to impact our communities, state and nation in a positive way with our actions. How would it change our wing if we all decided to perform to our potential? If you add a little extra to the ordinary, you get the extraordinary. I look forward to joining you in the effort to make our wing extraordinary.